

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 2, 8–10, and 12–20 are pending in the application. Claims 2, 8–10, and 12–18 stand rejected. Claims 19 and 20 stand objected to as allegedly dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The early notification of allowable subject matter is appreciated.

In this paper, claim 21 has been added, which is claim 19 rewritten to include all the limitations of base claim 12 and intervening claims 16–18. Claims 12 and 16–19 are canceled without prejudice. Claims 13, 15, and 20 are amended to depend from claim 21.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based on prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to be attached thereto. Reconsideration and reexamination of the application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 2, 9, 10, 12–17, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly anticipated by Japanese Patent Application Publication No. H07-59716 of Tanaka et al. The rejection is traversed.

Claims 12 and 16–18 are canceled without prejudice. Thus, the rejection is moot as to these claims. Applicants request withdrawal of the rejection of claims 12 and 16–18.

Claims 2, 9, 10, and 13–15 depend from new claim 21, which is claim 19 rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of base claim 12 and intervening claims 16–18, and which the Office action indicates is allowable. Thus, claims 2, 9, 10, and 13–15 are allowable.

Applicants request withdrawal of the rejection, and the allowance of claims 2, 9, 10, 13–15, and 21.

Claim Rejections — 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Tanaka ‘716. The rejection is traversed.

Through amendment, claim 8 depends from new claim 21, which the Office action indicates is allowable. Thus, claim 8 is allowable.

Applicants request withdrawal of the rejection and the allowance of claim 8.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above, claims 2, 8–10, 13–15, 20, and 21 are allowable over the prior art of record. Early notification of allowability is respectfully requested.

If there are remaining issues which the Examiner believes may be resolved in an interview, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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